

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GUATEM 04114 302033Z
ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 6584
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C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 4114

EXDIS

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: PBOR, GT, UK, BH
SUBJ: BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY'S LETTER TO SECRETARY VANCE

REF: (A) STATE 150952, (B) GUATEMALA 3588

1. EMBASSY WOULD HAVE STRONGLY PREFERRED THAT THE BRITISH THEMSELVES PROPOSE THE MOHO RIVER AS A SETTLEMENT OF THE BELIZE DISPUTE, BUT THIS NOW SEEMS UNLIKELY IN VIEW OF OWN'S LETTER TO THE SCRETARY. UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, WE BELIEVE THERE IS MERIT IN ACCEPTING OWN'S SUGGESTION THAT THE USG PROBE BEFORE JULY 6 GUATEMALA'S WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT A MOHO RIVER BOUNDARY.

2. WE DOUBT THAT WE WOULD RECEIVE A POSITIVE REPLY IN THAT SHORT A TIMEFRAME. ALL INTELLIGNECE REPORTING AND OUR DIRECT INQUIRY (GUATEMALA 2896) ESTABLISHED THAT THE GOG HAS SETTLED ON THE MONKEY RIVER AS ITS NEGOTIATING POSITION FOR THE WASHINGTON TALKS. IF A COUNTERPROPOSAL IS MADE TO THEM, WHETHER BY THE BRITISH OR RELYAED TO THEM BY THE USG, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THEY WOULD BE PREPARED IMMEDIATELY TO ACCEPT IT NOR TO OFFER SOME

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MIDDLE GROUND. AFTER ALL, THEY HAVE NEVER HAD A FORMAL TERRITORIAL PROPOSAL FROM THE BIRITSH OR ANYONE SPEAKING FOR THEM, AND IT SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISING THAT THEY WOULD WISH TO GIVE IT SOME THOUGHT BEFORE RESPONDING. IF PRESSED FOR AN IMMEDIATE REPLY, THEY WOULD MOST LIKELY SIMPLY RE-ITERATE THAT THE MONEKY IS THEIR MINIMUM DEMAND.

3. NEVETHELESS, BY RAISING A CONCRETE ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL, WE WOULD MAKE CLEAR TO THE GOG THAT THE CHANNEL OF PEACEFUL NEGOTIATION IS NOT CLOSED, REGARDLESS OF WHAT HAPPENS IN THE JULY 6-7 TALKS. WE ALSO SEE MERIT IN INSURING IN THIS WAY THAT THE BRITISH FLEXIBILITY ABOUT THE MOHO IS INTRODUCED INTO THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS AS WE HAVE SOME CONCERN THAT THE BRITISH MIGHT, AFTER ANOTHER STALEMATED MEETING WITH GOG NEGOTIATORS, WITHDRAW FROM THEIR WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS THE MOHO. IF THE ATMOSPHERE FOLLOWING THE TALKS IS SUCH THAT EITHER SIDE IS UNWILLING TO MEET FURTHER, OUR APPROACH WILL HAVE ALSO SERVED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT WE ARE READY TO ACT AS AN INTERMEDIARY.

4. WE SHOULD BE PREPARED TO ENGAGE IN A POSSIBLY LENGTHY INTERCHANGE WITH THE GOG AND WE SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE RISK THAT IT WOULD BE, IN THE END, UNSUCCESSFUL, BECAUSE OF INTRANSIGENCE ON THE PART OF ANY OR ALL OF THE THREE PARTIES. BUT THIS MAY BE THE ONLY WAY TO PREVENT A FINAL BREAKDOWN OF THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS AND A STEDY MOVEMENT BY THE GUATEMALANS AND THE UK TOWARD A CONFRONTATION.

BOSTER

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** EXDIS

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

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